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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 006619

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MFA DEPUTY U/S BOZKIR OPTIMISTIC ABOUT TURKEY'S EU CHANCES BUT ADMITS CYPRUS STILL AN OBSTACLE

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman. Reason: 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: In a Oct. 20 courtesy call, MFA Deputy U/S for EU affairs Bozkir told the Ambassador that he is optimistic about Turkey's EU prospects. The GOT has passed the necessary laws related to the Copenhagen Criteria. Bozkir admitted that Cyprus is a looming problem but added that a positive EU progress report next month could build on pro-EU public sentiment to spur a solution on the island. End Summary.

2. (C) In his initial Oct. 20 call on MFA Deputy Under Secretary Volkan Bozkir, who is responsible for relations

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with the EU, Ambassador reiterated strong U.S. support for Turkey's EU candidacy. While applauding GOT efforts to pass EU-related legislation, Ambassador stressed that implementation will be important. He noted that Turkey's chances of becoming a full EU member could be hurt a solution if not found for Cyprus by next spring.

3. (C) Bozkir said that there has been a change in psychology in Turkey since the end of the PKK threat in 1999. Turks at all levels understand that achieving EU membership will be beneficial for all of Turkey. Firm GOT support has helped to get the message out. Even the bureaucracy does not want to be an obstacle to membership anymore, he claimed.

4. (C) Bozkir asserted that legally, Turkey has "achieved critical mass" with regard to the Copenhagen Criteria. Bozkir acknowledged that implementation is really only now beginning but said that the legal framework for implementation is in place. Bozkir said he is optimistic concerning the EU progress report, which will be released at the beginning of November. At the moment, EU countries are giving Turkey a consistent message: Turkey has done well; focus on implementation; and work to solve Cyprus.

5. (C) A positive progress report, he said, will boost public support for the EU and could give the GOT room to work on more difficult issues, such as Cyprus. Bozkir claimed, however, that even with a positive report, the GOT may not make progress on Cyprus because of Turkish local elections in March 2004. Noting that his office only peripherally deals with Cyprus, Bozkir argued that the EU Commission needs to be more flexible on Cyprus and that lifting the economic embargo against the "TRNC" would be a helpful gesture.

6. (C) Bozkir said that in addition to maintaining in close contact with his counterparts in Italy, which currently holds the EU Presidency, he has had consultations with the Irish, who will hold the Presidency the first half of 2004, and the Netherlands. The Netherlands will hold the Presidency during the crucial Dec. 2004 EU summit where EU members will decide whether Turkey is to begin negotiations. Bozkir acknowledged that the Netherlands is concerned about the prospect of Turkey's EU membership but said that the new Dutch government appears to be more flexible.

EDELMAN